An Empirical Study of the Effect of Endorser on Purchase Intention
--Evidence from UNIQLO

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Abstract

UNIQLO is a Japanese fast-fashion brand which is popular and famous in Taiwan. This study uses UNIQLO as an example to investigate the relationships and effects of endorser, self-concept, brand image, and purchase intention using questionnaires from June 1, 2016 to September 30, 2016. The research findings show that endorser has a direct effect on self-concept, brand image and purchase intention. It also has an indirect effect on purchase intention via brand image. However, endorser does not have an indirect effect on purchase intention via self-concept.

Keywords: endorser; self-concept; brand image; purchase intention

1. Introduction

The popularity of fast-fashion brands, including UNIQLO, ZARA, and H&M, are growing worldwide. UNIQLO is a Japanese apparel brand, ZARA is a Spanish retailer, and H&M is a Swedish apparel retailer. UNIQLO is the first one to enter Taiwan among these three.UNIQLO is a Japanese casual wear designer, manufacturer and retailer. Since opening its first store outside Japan in 2001, UNIQLO International has expanded to 958 stores, including 560 in Greater China (Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan), 173 in South Korea, 144 in Southeast Asia and Oceania, 36 in Europe and 45 in the U.S. New store openings have been especially rapid in Greater China and Southeast Asia (http://www.fastretailing.com/eng/group/strategy/).UNIQLO offers high-quality casual wear at reasonable prices. There has been a considerable growth of UNIQLO since its first entrance into Taiwan in October 2010. At the end of June 2017, there are 65 stores in Taiwan. UNIQLO has become an important option for consumers in Taiwan.

Understanding the self-concept and self-image can help the marketers to develop more effective marketing programs. Besides, many apparel companies use celebrities as product endorsers and company spokesmen, bringing rise to a question: Do celebrities have a significant impact on self-concept? Can they really enhance companies' brand image or consumers' purchase intention? Though UNIQLO is popular and famous in Taiwan, but the related research studies are rather limited. Therefore, this study collected the opinions of 497 consumers to explore the relationships and effects of endorser, self-concept, brand image, and purchase intention. Results of this study provide a reference for apparel practitioners and consumers. The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews previous research on endorser, self-concept, brand image, and purchase intention. Section 3 describes the hypotheses, questionnaire design and data collection. Section 4 reports the empirical result. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Endorser

An endorser is a celebrity or a well-known and respected individual who serves as an advocate of a brand or a product, use his image in the minds of consumers to shape the brand image, and generate a lot of publicity and attention from the consumers (Ohanian, 1991). Enterprises often display the properties and quality of goods to consumers through advertising endorsers' personal characteristics. Based on the trust in endorsers, consumers will transfer their perceived image of the endorsers to the brand image, and hence make the products in ads more recognized by consumers (Biswas, Biswas & Das, 2006).According to Freiden (1984), endorsers can be classified into four types: celebrities, experts, CEOs, and typical consumers. Different types of endorsers have different personal characteristics, therefore, the way to persuade consumers in endorsement advertising, and the process of receiving and dealing with the message in advertising are also different. Ohanian (1991) defined endorser to include three components: attractiveness, credibility, and reputation. Credibility is the degree of confidence that a consumer has in the advertising spokesperson or the message he advocates (Ohanian, 1990). Attractive communicators are liked more, are perceived in more favorable terms, and have a positive impact on the products with which they are associated (Joseph, 1982). Consumers tend to have a credible evaluation of highly attractive endorser (Bower and Landreth, 2001).

Celebrity reputation can generate public attention. Friedman, Santeramo and Traina (1978) conducted two studies to determine those attributes of a celebrity which correlate most highly with trust. Their studies demonstrated the strong relationship between trust and likeableness. Miciak and Shanklin(1994) also suggested that the use of internationally renowned endorser can get immediate awareness and meet the advertising demands.

2.2. Self-concept

Cooley (1902) created the concept of the looking-glass self. He stated that a person's self grows out of his social interactions with others and the perceptions of others. "In very broad terms, self-concept is a person's perception of himself. These perceptions are formed through his experience with his environment …and are influenced especially by environmental reinforcements and significant others… Self-concept may be described as: organized, multifaceted, hierarchical, stable, developmental, evaluative, and differentiable." (Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton, 1976). In general, the term self-concept refers to how someone thinks about, evaluates or perceives oneself. It is a collection of beliefs about oneself (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987; Hawkins, Best, and Coney, 2001). Self-concept can be classified into four constructs: actual self-concept, ideal self-concept, social self-concept, and ideal social self-concept (Sirgy, 1982). When an individual perceives another person or product can enhance their self-concept, he or she tries to link to the person or product. Otherwise, he or she may try to distort his or her self-concept, or resist the person or product (Belk, 1988). Self-concept is valued because self-perception is an important aspect of life performance or subjective experience. How one perceives himself is the reaction of life experiences, and the behavior will be deeply affected by self-reference too. Self-concept is used to express the integration and organization of personality (Pervin, Cervone & John, 2001).

2.3. Brand Image

The American Marketing Association defines brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol, design or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services to differentiate them from the competition". Brand image is defined as "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory" (Keller 1993), the image of a product exists in consumer mind (Davis, 2000), or consumer's responses to brand name, logo or impression (Magid, Anthony and Cox, 2006). Accordingly, brand image does not exist in the features, technology or the actual product itself, but rather it is something brought out by advertisements, promotions or users. When consumers are evaluating a product before purchasing, brand image is often used as an extrinsic cue (Zeithaml, 1988; Richardson, Dick and Jain, 1994; Bhat and Reddy, 1998; Pars and Gulsel, 2011). The determinants of brand image include the appearance of the product, the attributes, the functions, and the role of the product in consumer's life (Davis, 2000).

2.4. Purchase Intention

Purchase intention has been argued to be the most important indicator to forecast consumer behavior. It is defined as personal behavioral tendency to a particular product (Bagozzi and Burnkrant, 1979), the likelihood that a customer will buy a particular product (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Dodds et al., 1991; Schiffman and Kanuk, 2000), or "an individual's conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand" (Spears and Singh, 2004).

A greater willingness to buy a product means the probability to buy it is higher, but not necessarily to actually buy it. On the contrary, a lower willingness does not mean an absolute impossibility to buy.

3. Data and Methods

3.1. Hypotheses

1. Influence of endorser on self-concept, brand image, and purchase intention Endorser plays an important role in valuation and purchase decisions. The use of well-known celebrities to endorse a product can not only get consumers' awareness but also stimulate consumers' familiarity with the product. The endorsers show a positive attitude toward the product in the advertising, and consumers' purchase intention will be greatly enhanced when they have a good impression for the endorser (Miciak and Shanklin, 1994). The congruence between a consumer's perceptions of a celebrity's personality characteristics with this consumer's self-concept adds the celebrity endorser effects (Choi and Rifon, 2012).

The endorser can create a significant personality for the brand and have a positive impact on the brand, so it can be regarded as a powerful tool to shape the brand image (McCracken, 1989). D' Souza and Rao (1995) pointed out that enterprises use celebrity endorsement advertising to attract public attention to enhance the brand image. Consumers can get the brand information from advertising and the brand image will be deeply in the minds of consumers and have an impact on them. Ohanian (1991) examined the use of endorser in advertising, focusing on 3 sources of credibility: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. His research showed that perceived expertise of celebrities significantly impact purchase intentions. Lafferty, Goldsmith, and Newell (2002) proposed a theory to investigate the combined influence of corporate and endorser credibility on consumers' attitudes toward the ads and brands, and their intent to purchase the advertised product. Their findings indicated that both types of source credibility have an impact on attitudes and purchase intentions. Pornpitakpan's (2003) research results also indicate that endorser credibility has a significant impact on consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, we propose the following three hypotheses.

H1: The endorser has a significant impact on self-concept.
H2: The endorser has a significant impact on brand image.
H3: The endorser has a significant impact on purchase intention.

2. Relationships between brand image, self-concept, and purchase intention

Many scholars have considered that brand image is relevant to consumers' self-concept and purchase intention. Johar and Sirgy's（1991）research showed that the effect of brand image on the real self-concept is mainly based on the psychological motivation of the pursuit of self-congruity, whereas the effect of brand image on the ideal self-concept is mainly from the psychological motivation of the pursuit of self-improvement. Loudon and Bitta (1993) suggested that if the brand image has a positive impact on the self-concept, it can be inferred that consumers may like this brand more. However, in many cases when the brand image has no effect on the actual self-concept of the consumer, it may have an impact on the ideal self-concept, and consumers will still prefer to buy the brand. Gardner and Levy (1955) argued that consumers prefer to choose a product / brand in which consumers' self-concept is similar to the brand image of this product / brand. It is because sometimes the consumption is made not only for the practicality of the product itself, but because the product has a symbolic value to meet consumers' feelings and hope.

Consumers' self-concept has an important impact on purchase decisions (Ericksen, 1997; Graeff, 1996; Sirgy, 1982). Sirgy (1982) reviewed self-concept theory and research in consumer behavior. He found that consumers' purchase intention will be increased when brand image is more consistent with their self-concept. When consumers' actual self-concept and ideal self-concept are more consistent, the brand preference or probability to buy the product will also be higher (Malhotra, 1988; Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987). The congruence between a brand's image and a consumer's self-concept has significant impacts on consumers' brand evaluations and purchase intentions (Graeff, 1996). Aaker and Keller's (1990) research results indicate that brand image positively influence consumers' brand loyalty, trust in products, and willingness to buy. Biel (1992) regarded brand image as a critical part of constructing brand equity. Positive brand image not only increases consumers' perceived value of product, but also influences their purchase intention. Keller (1993) also argued that consumers' intention to purchase will be higher when they hold favorable image of a brand. Accordingly, we set up the next three hypotheses as follows.

H4: Brand image has a significantly positive impact on self-concept
H5: Self-concept has a significantly positive impact on purchase intention.
H6: Brand image has a significantly positive impact on purchase intention.

3.2. Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

According to the research framework, we design the items of the questionnaire for the four dimensions: endorser, self-concept, brand image, and purchase intention. These items are measured on Likert's seven-point scale, ranging from 1 point to 7 points, denoting "very disagree", "disagree", "a little disagree", "neutral", "a little agree", "agree", and "very agree", respectively. The gauging s cales are selected from the literature. Endorser is measured by 7 items proposed by Ohanian(1991). Self-concept is gauged by 8 items taken from Sirgy(1982). Brand image is measured by 10 items taken from Biel (1992).Purchase intention is gauged by 5 items proposed by Dodds et al. (1991) and Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). The questionnaire was modified through a pre-test. Based on convenience sampling, we selected 50 consumers for the pre-test of the questionnaire. The pre-test results show that all the dimensions have a Cronbach's α value greater than 0.7, it means a good reliability (Nunnally, 1978; Wortzel, 1979). The results from factor analysis indicate that all factors have an eigenvalue greater than 1, a factor loading greater than 0.6, a cumulative explained variation greater than 50%, and all the correlations between each factor and their items are greater than 0.5.This meets the criterion of convergent validity proposed by Kaiser (1958). Accordingly, we use this pre-test questionnaire as our formal questionnaire. We administered the questionnaires to consumers who have ever purchased UNIQLO products from June 1, 2016 to September 30, 2016. A total of 500 responses were distributed, and 497 usable responses were collected. An acceptable response rate was 99.40%.

4. *Analyses and Results*

We perform data analyses on SPSS 21.0 and AMOS 21.0. The methods adopted include descriptive statistics analysis, reliability and validity analysis, correlation analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics Analysis

Through descriptive statistics analysis in Table 1, we found that the basic attributes of major group are female (67.4%), 21-30 years old (46.6%), unmarried (78.5%), students (61.5%), and monthly income below NT$10,000 (47.5%).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics analysis of sample

	Items	No. of respondents	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	162	32.6
	Female	335	67.4
Age group	Younger than 20 years old	174	35.0
	21-30 years old	232	46.6
	31-40 years old	56	11.4
	41-50 years old	28	4.6
	Older than 50 years old	7	1.4
Marital status	Unmarried	390	78.5
	Married	107	21.5
Occupation	Service industry	100	20.1
	Manufacturing industry	33	6.6
	Information technology	12	2.4
	Financial industry	7	1.4
	Public servants & teachers	4	1.0
	Students	306	61.5
	Others	35	7.0
Monthly income (NT$)	Below 10,000	236	47.5
	10,001-20,000	105	21.1
	20,001-30,000	93	18.7
	30,001-40,000	46	9.3
	More than 40,000	17	3.4
This table shows the descriptive statistics analysis for the sample data. The first column is demographic variables in this study. The third and fourth column reveals the frequency and percentage of total number of observations in each category, respectively.			

4.2. Reliability and Validity Analysis

We use composite reliability (CR) to measure of the reliability. It is defined to have "internal consistency reliability" when CR has a value greater than 0.7 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). According to the results in Table 2, all the dimensions have a CR value greater than 0.7, which indicates good internal consistency reliability.

This research conducts confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to measure convergent validity. As presented in Table 2, all CR estimates are greater than 0.7, all factor loadings are greater than 0.5, and all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) estimates are also near or greater than 0.5 in these four dimensions. This is consistent with the criterion of convergent validity proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Hair et al. (2009).

Table2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Dimension		Factor loading	CR	AVE
Endorser	EN1	0.784	0.900	0.563
	EN2	0.771		
	EN3	0.791		
	EN4	0.787		
	EN5	0.748		
	EN6	0.743		
	EN7	0.616		
Self-concept	SC1	0.721	0.903	0.539
	SC2	0.611		
	SC3	0.733		
	SC4	0.745		
	SC5	0.760		
	SC6	0.794		
	SC7	0.776		
	SC8	0.720		
Brand image	BI1	0.560	0.888	0.443
	BI2	0.624		
	BI3	0.687		
	BI4	0.697		
	BI5	0.712		
	BI6	0.672		
	BI7	0.693		
	BI8	0.737		
	BI9	0.579		
	BI10	0.675		
Purchase intentions	PI1	0.756	0.893	0.624
	PI2	0.791		
	PI3	0.822		
	PI4	0.809		
	PI5	0.771		

This table shows confirmatory factor analysis on expectation, service quality, satisfaction, and behavioral intention. CR, AVE represents composite reliability, and average variance extracted, respectively. ***, ** and * indicate significance at the 0.1, 1 and 5 percent levels, respectively.

Table 3 presents the results of discriminant analyses, with the values on the diagonal being AVE of our four dimensions (constructs): endorser, self-concept, brand image, and purchase intention. Values on the non-diagonal are the square of the correlation between two constructs. We note that the questionnaire has discriminant validity, because the AVE of each construct is greater than the square of the correlation between any two constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). In addition, our scale and item contents are constructed according to the literature review and do pass the questionnaire pre-test, so it also has content validity.

Table 3: Discriminant Analysis

	Endorser	Self-concept	Brand image	Purchase intention
Endorser	0. 563			
Self-concept	0.049	0.539		
Brand Image	0.099	0.053	0.443	
Intention	0.168	0.031	0.305	0.624

This table shows discriminant analysis of perceived price, perceived value, perceived risk, purchase situation, and purchase intention. Values on the diagonal and non-diagonal are AVE estimates and the square of correlation between two constructs, respectively.

4.3. Structural Equation Modeling Analysis

This section conducts structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis to test the fit of the factors (dimensions) of endorser,self-concept, brand image, and purchase intention.For a model with good fit, GFI (goodness of fit) should greater than 0.8 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit) should be greater than 0.8, and CFI (comparative fit index) should be greater than 0.9 (Doll, Xia, Torkzadeh, 1994; Hair et al., 2009; Gefenet al., 2000). RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) should be under 0.08 (Browne and Cudeck, 1993), and the ratio of the chi-square value to degrees of freedom ($\frac{\chi^2}{df}$) should be no greater than 5(Wheaton et al., 1977).The goodness-of-fit indices of the model are as follows: GFI is 0.846, AGFI is 0.820, CFI is 0.864, RMSEA is 0.067, and $\frac{\chi^2}{df}$ is 3.240. All these indices are within or near the acceptable range, meaning that the overall model fitness is good.

4.4. Results from the Hypotheses Verified

Figure 1 presents the path analyses from SEM. According to the estimated values of the standardized parameters of the relationship model in Figure 1, we find thatendorserhas a significantly positive influence on self-concept (S-C),brand image and purchase intention (H1, H2 and H3 are supported).
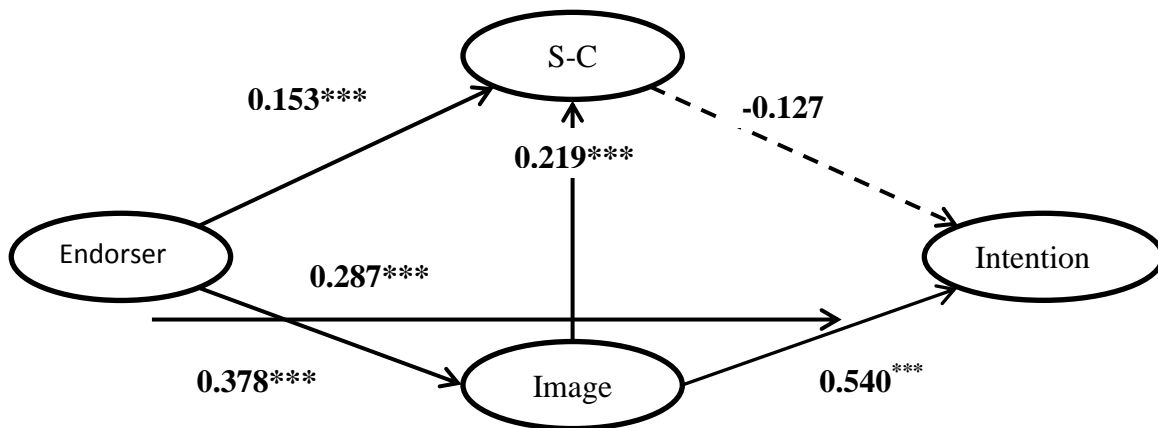
With regard to the relationships of self-concept, brand image, and purchase intention, we find that brand image has a significantly positive impact on both self-concept and purchase intention (H4 and H6 are supported). However, the impact of self-concept on purchase intention is insignificant (H5 is not supported).

The results from H1, H2, and H3 indicate that endorser has a direct effect on self-concept, brand image and purchase intention. Moreover, the supported H2 and H6 show that endorser also has an indirect effect on purchase intention via brand image.   However, the unsupported H5 indicate that endorser does not have an indirect effect on purchase intention via self-concept.

Table 4: AMOS Model Fit Test Results

Hypotheses and Paths	Factor loadings	Results
H1: Endorser ⟶ Self-concept	0.153***	Supported
H2: Endorser ⟶ Brand image	0.378***	Supported
H3: Endorser ⟶ Purchase intention	0.287***	Supported
H4: Brand image ⟶ Self-concept	0.219***	Supported
H5: Self-concept ⟶ Purchase intention	-0.127	Unsupported
H6: Brand image ⟶ Purchase intention	0.540***	Supported

This table shows the estimated values of standardized parameters and the hypothesis test results. The first column represents our research hypotheses (paths). The figure in second column is the standardized factor loading of each path. ***, **, and * indicate significance at the 0.1, 1 and 5 percent levels respectively.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The popularity of fast-fashion brands, including UNIQLO, ZARA, and H&M, are growing worldwide. UNIQLO is the first one to enter Taiwan among these three, and it is also popular and famous in Taiwan. Therefore, this study uses UNIQLO as an example to investigate the relationships and effects of endorser, self-concept, brand image, and purchase intention through a questionnaire.

Using random sampling, we administered the questionnaires to consumers who have ever purchased UNIQLO products from June 1, 2016 to September 30, 2016. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed, and 497 usable responses were collected, for an acceptable response rate of 99.40%. We perform data analyses through SPSS 21.0 and AMOS 21.0, with the adopted methods including descriptive statistics analysis, reliability and validity analysis, correlation analysis, and structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis. The research findings indicate that endorser has a significantly positive influence on self-concept, brand image and purchase intention (H1, H2 and H3 are supported). Besides, brand image has a significantly positive impact on both self-concept and purchase intention (H4 and H6 are supported). However, the impact of self-concept on purchase intention is insignificant (H5 is not supported).

The results from SEM show that endorser has a direct effect on self-concept, brand image and purchase intention. It also has an indirect effect on purchase intention via brand image. However, endorser does not has an indirect effect on purchase intention via self-concept. The implication is that endorser can not only enhance consumers' purchase intention directly, but also impact a company's brand image, which in turn stimulating consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, we suggest that apparel practitioners should pay more attention to find a suitable product endorser to enhance their companies' brand image and consumers' purchase intention.

Acknowledgement

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